

People -
Hatfield, Juliana

ENTERTAINMENT WEEKLY

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ALMOST MISBEHAVIN'

**JULIANA HATFIELD'S
ANGUISHED SONGWRITING
PAYS OFF WITH FANS
—BUT HER OUTRAGEOUS
STATEMENTS OFTEN
COME BACK TO HAUNT HER**

"I GUESS I SHOULD have warned you," Juliana Hatfield is saying, peeking demurely from behind her front door. "I'm kind of a slob." ♦ The 27-year-old rocker has a gift for understatement. Her Greenwich Village pad is Martha Stewart's worst nightmare. Massive mounds of laundry are piled up in the bedroom; magazines and books are flopped open everywhere; dishes are stacked high in the sink. "Oh, look," she offers brightly, pointing to a dust bunny the size of a Buick. "Maybe you should write about *that*. You know, the squalor of my life." ♦ Cluttered apartment,

BY BENJAMIN SVETKEY

PHOTOGRAPHS BY DAN BORRIS / EDGE



cluttered heart. Not a bad story angle, actually; if only her career were a mess, as well. But no such luck. This month, Atlantic releases Hatfield's *Only Everything*, a breezily aggressive third album that should finally end her stint as alt rock's girl-most-likely-to-succeed. "Something just clicked in my brain when we got into the studio," she says. "Some door opened and it was like, 'Oh, that's how you do it.' Maybe it's because I gave up coffee and dairy, but suddenly I felt confident and relaxed."

well as the records she made as part of the Blake Babies, her 1987-91 Boston-based pop band—this latest album is chockful of dreamy, hooky tunes brimming with angst and ennui. It's more opaque and sophisticated than her younger work, but the shtick remains the same: that disarming grunge-nymphet voice punching through a wall of noisy low-rent guitar riffs. Even the album's poppiest tunes have a gritty, harrowing edge—like the ballad "Live on Tomorrow," in which Hat-

field chirps sweetly about the various tortures an ex-lover can inflict. Given her predilection for subjects close to adolescent hearts, it's hardly shocking that Hatfield's most rabid fans have been teenage girls. She gets bags of tearstained letters every month. "It kind of scares me sometimes," she says, picking pensively at a patch on her corduroy jeans. "It makes me wonder if, like, I'm really retarded in my emotional growth."

Heart-Beat"—*Only Everything's* first single—into a punky parody of an exercise class. Dressed in black leotards, Hatfield plays a saw-toothed pill-popping aerobics instructor who grinds her eager students into near-comas. "Something about the idea was so right for her," says its director, Phil Morrison, a longtime Hatfield chum. "She's cute and desiccated at the same time. That's so her."

Hatfield has been flirting with the video medium more and more lately. Last year she did a guest spot on the

HATFIELD ON HER TEEN FANS: "IT MAKES ME WONDER IF, LIKE, I'M REALLY RETARDED IN EMOTIONAL GROWTH"

FIRST BORN: Hatfield with her fellow Blake Babies, Freda Boner and John Strohm, in 1989



Whatever it was, the decaffeinated, lactose-free Hatfield has made her smoothest, most accomplished album so far, and at a time when female rockers—be they Liz Phair, the Breeders, or Veruca Salt—have never been more marketable. Hatfield's own sales curve is particularly fetching. Her first solo release, 1992's *Hey Babe*, sold about 60,000 copies. Her second, in '92, *Become What You Are*, sold more than 233,000. Expectations for *Only Everything*, not surprisingly, are riding in the high six figures. "This one could go gold, for sure," offers Atlantic president Val Azzoli, presumably with his fingers crossed. "She's matured as an artist."

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"WANNA SEE MY new video?" Hatfield offers, loading a cassette into her VCR. "I thought up the idea myself. It came to me in a vision."

The vision, it turns out, was to turn the kicky pop track "Universal

teenybopper melodrama *My So-Called Life*, playing a homeless musician ghost (she also has a song on the show's soundtrack, released in January). So far the exposure hasn't prompted a noticeable increase in fan attention—"I never even get propositioned backstage," she says, sounding not too disappointed—but the predicted success of *Only Everything* could change, well, only everything.

How will Hatfield cope with megafame? Perhaps not too well. Her relationship with the press has always been a tad dysfunctional. "Doing interviews can sometimes mess up my head," she says. "It makes me feel dirty. It's frustrating how the press recycles a quote to death. I guess I'll

just have to throw out some new crazy statements, but it's hard to plan that sort of thing."

Not that hard. Hatfield is notorious for pushing people's buttons with provocative statements. There was her infamous girls being bad guitar players quip in 1992, which triggered a wave of female backlash. But the most recycled of all was Hatfield's 1992 *Interview* magazine confession that, at 25, she was still a virgin. "I knew that was going to pop out of my mouth sooner or later," she says now.

Hatfield, a fashion editor at *The Boston Globe*.) "My songs are less specific and more open to interpretation now," she says. "I can write about anything. I can write about that candle over there"—she points to a blob of wax on a table—"and it can have whatever meaning people give it. It gives me more opportunity to see art in more places."

Her director pal Morrison sees the difference this way: "Juliana has always gone back and forth between being emotionally tentative and emo-

tionally forthcoming," he says. "One minute she's cagey, the next she's flooded with emotion. And she's changing all the time. She's gone from playing in front of 12 people at clubs to performing in front of kajillions in stadiums. That's gotta change you."

Still, he promises, whatever happens with *Only Everything*, "she'll be all right. If she takes her time and listens to her instincts, she'll be fine. That's really all she needs right now."

A good housekeeper wouldn't hurt, either. ♦

**HATFIELD ON HER TROUBLES
WITH THE PRESS:
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"But I don't regret it. I'm a fatalist about stuff like that. Someday that quote will go away." (There's also some doubt about whether it was even true. Hatfield hasn't exactly lived a monk's life: She's been romantically linked to head Lemonhead Evan Dando, among others.)

Actually, Hatfield is more rattled by reactions to the semiconfessions in the lyrics of her earlier albums—songs about battles with eating disorders, self-mutilation, and the other low-self-esteem afflictions she reportedly wrestled with while growing up in the upper middle-class Boston suburb of Duxbury. (Her parents divorced when she was an adolescent; Hatfield lived with her mother, Julie

